

Concerning a 'third' Jewish temple

Maurice Beale

AT ONE PM Jerusalem time on Sunday 29 July 2001 there was yet another disturbance at what Arabs call al-Haram al-Sharif and we call the Temple Mount. Thirty Muslims were injured when Jerusalem police stormed the area to stop them throwing stones on Jews attending to their devotions at the base of the Western Wall.¹ This was not the first time Jews had been stoned from the Temple Mount, but it *may* have been a sign of the accelerating importance of something that, sooner or later, will prove to be of great Biblical significance.

The ostensible reason for the riot was that year's march by an ultranationalist group called the Temple Mount Faithful, carrying a symbolic cornerstone for a new Jewish temple. Although this hitherto obscure group would have liked to have held a cornerstone-laying ceremony in al-Haram al-Sharif, they were not allowed even into the Old City, let alone onto the Temple Mount. So there never was a realistic chance that the cornerstone would be laid, at least not then. Security considerations simply made such a wild scheme impossible.

The march had been held before. But it was the first time it seemed to gain such wide publicity, and then only because of the minor riot of which it was the ostensible (and utterly insufficient) cause. The news reports carried only the briefest of mentions of a Jewish temple as the reason for the march.

What is interesting about this event is that it may have been another small step towards an important sign of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. A surprising number of latter-day Bible prophecies make mention of a functioning Jewish temple at the time of Messiah's coming. To be brief we will support this assertion with just one argument. There are others, and the concept itself is deeply entrenched in prophecy.

A time of trouble

In his description of end-time events, Daniel used some very plain speech:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that

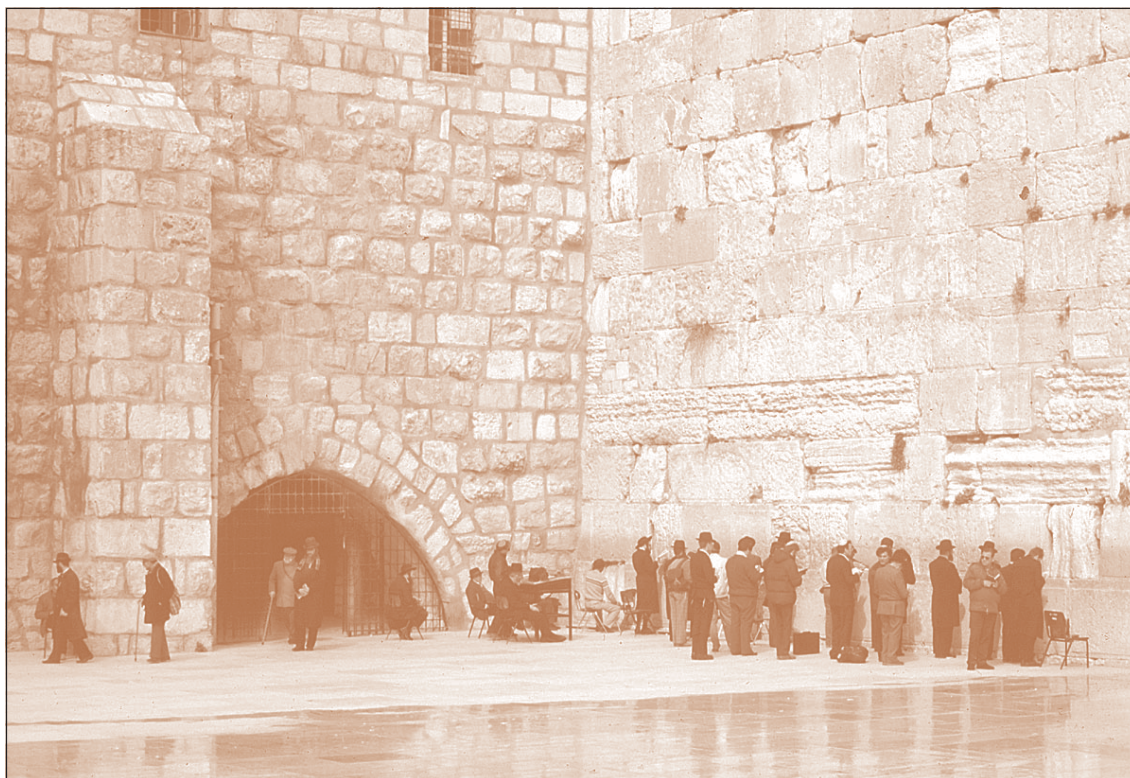
time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (12:1-4).

It would be hard to argue that the principal application of these words is to any other time than the coming of the Lord Jesus to reign. Leaving aside any discussion of precisely who is meant by "Michael",² we see that Daniel's people are delivered at "that time", every one, that is, whose name is "found written in the book". This is a different kind of deliverance for Israel from what they have usually experienced. Most deliverances have been for the nation as a whole, because of the national covenant. This, on the other hand, is for individuals, those who are "found written in the book". It is also the time of the resurrection. After receiving the prophecy, Daniel was to seal the book (meaning, presumably, that its message was not to be understood) until the time of the end.

The book's seals were to be loosed at "the time of the end", near to "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time". This is a very interesting and precise phrase. We should think about its meaning. It says that at the time of the end there will be a time of trouble of greater devastation than any of the many tribulations that have preceded it throughout the whole course of history. This is a very troubling notion, for history is largely a catalogue of trouble, and some of these troubles have been extremely trying.

We should notice, too, that, unless there are greater troubles to follow those out of which Daniel's latter-day people are to be delivered (a

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1. Source: an article by Etgar Lefkovits in the *Jerusalem Post* for Sunday 29 Jul. 2001.
 2. 'Michael' means 'who is like God'. Consider, too, the implications of Revelation 12:7,9.



Jews praying at the Western Wall, formerly referred to as the Wailing Wall. The lower parts of this wall are the remains of the retaining wall of the Temple Mount and were built by Herod the Great. This is the nearest that Orthodox Jews today get to the site of their ancient temple on the Mount itself; their religion forbids them to go onto the Mount itself for fear they may walk over the actual spot where the temple was.

notion that is specifically denied in many latter-day prophecies³), there cannot be more than one such time of unprecedented trouble. Israel has had many difficulties in its history. The trouble that ushers in the reign of their Messiah will surpass them all. Though this is hard to contemplate, Daniel's words are clear and their meaning cannot be avoided. Moreover, Daniel is not the only prophet to use such precision about the last days, "a time of trouble, such as never was". We find similar phrases in Joel 2:2 and Jeremiah 30:7.

The Olivet Prophecy

Jesus also said much the same thing in the Olivet Prophecy when answering the disciples' question as to how they might know that his coming to reign was imminent. After giving a number of general preconditions and telling the disciples not to be distracted by these,⁴ the Lord then made three specific points, the first two being signs of his coming, and the third a description

of the coming itself. Between these three specific points are two brief passages describing events that may affect disciples in that time and giving guidance as to how they should react during the tremendous upheaval of the last days. Leaving out the elaborations, so as to gain a clearer view of the essence of his message, here is the Lord's answer to the disciples' question, using Matthew's record:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains" (24:15,16);

3. For example, Joel 2:2,19,26,27 and Isaiah 62:4,8.
4. Matthew 24:4-14. Verses 6, 8 and 14 make it clear that this section is a warning that the kinds of things mentioned in these verses may happen at any time and are not specific signs of the Lord's imminent coming.

“for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (v. 21);

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (vv. 29,30).

There is a simple and plainly understandable sequence. The Lord will return at the end of (actually, so as to end⁵) a time of unprecedented trouble—trouble for Israel, that is, as is evident from the context, and also from a very great number of other prophecies. However, we will not pursue this important issue at present.

The abomination of desolation in the holy place

The time of trouble will begin when “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet” stands “in the holy place” (v. 15). If we were to be asked what the words “holy place” mean, high on our list would be some reference to Moses’ tabernacle or a Jewish temple. When Jesus spoke of the abomination of desolation in “the holy place” his hearers would immediately have thought of the temple.

There are at least three reasons for this. In the first place, the disciples and Jesus were sitting on the Mount of Olives looking across the Kidron valley at Herod’s temple. Secondly, this whole discussion had been prompted by Jesus’s startling assertion that not one stone of the temple would be left standing upon another.⁶ And thirdly, Daniel’s allusions to the abomination of desolation had been ‘fulfilled’ in the days of the Maccabees, when the second temple had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes.⁷ Indeed, except for Jesus’s implication that Daniel’s prophecy had not yet been fulfilled, we might have relegated the abomination of desolation to history, and have paid it no further attention.

As it is, Jesus clearly will come back at the end of a time of unprecedented trouble, beginning from the placing of an abomination of desolation in a holy place. So there has to be a holy place—and hence a temple—before the Lord’s coming.

Latter days, not A.D. 70

This elementary deduction is powerfully confirmed by considering Jesus’s description of the time of trouble. To what time in history might the Lord have been referring? When asked, most of us think of A.D. 70. But though the events of A.D. 70 modelled the tribulation that will herald the Lord’s return, they were no more a final fulfilment of the Lord’s prophecy than the Maccabees were of Daniel’s.

Daniel said that the time of trouble that will precede the Lord’s coming will be greater than any that ever came before it. Of course, this includes the troubles of A.D. 70. It also includes, for example, Hitler’s holocaust. It includes *all* previous times of trouble. He said it would be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.

Jesus used similar words, but not exactly the same. Like Daniel, he said that there would be a time of trouble such as never was. But he added an extra clause; he spoke of a time of trouble such as never was, “*no, nor ever shall be*”. For the moment, let us suppose he was referring to A.D. 70. If he had not added the final clause then this supposition might be sustained. We might then understand that A.D. 70 was the greatest time of trouble there had ever been—up to that time. We might further understand Daniel’s latter-day time of trouble to be a *greater* tribulation, and there would be no tension between Daniel’s words and Jesus’s.

However, the Lord’s rider rules out such an interpretation. The time of trouble of which he was speaking was to be more extreme than any that had come before it. But neither would it be exceeded by any *later* tribulation. Logically, this means that the time to which the Lord was referring cannot precede Daniel’s. This conclusion is

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5. See Matthew 24:22, for example, though there are very many other prophecies that teach the same thing.
 6. Matthew 24:2 applies to the temple; Luke 19:44 to the whole of then-standing Jerusalem, and certainly includes the still-surviving Western Wall, for example. So the prophecies are, as yet, unfulfilled.
 7. See 1 Maccabees 1:44ff.; 4:36ff.; and Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12:5:4; 12:7:6. These references are interesting in that they clearly show how Daniel’s prophecies about the abomination of desolation were understood in the days of the disciples, but detailed analysis will show that Daniel’s prophecies were only roughly fulfilled in the invasion by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C., justifying Jesus’s ‘latter-day’ application of Daniel.

utterly inescapable. So if Jesus had been referring to A.D. 70 then we would be forced to conclude that Daniel was too. But the books were not opened in A.D. 70; Daniel's people were not delivered in A.D. 70; there was no resurrection in A.D. 70. Furthermore, the Lord did not come to reign in A.D. 70. The Olivet Prophecy is not about A.D. 70.

In this case we have to look more carefully at Daniel's abomination of desolation. There are four passages. Two of these are in Daniel 11 and 12, the prophecy we have been considering. For brevity we will presently consider only the first of these:⁸ "And arms shall stand on his [the king of the north's] part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate" (11:31).

According to Jesus, this is the event that triggers the final, greatest, unprecedented, never-to-be-repeated tribulation. A sanctuary will be polluted, an abomination of desolation (whatever precisely that means) will be "place[d]" (Jesus said it would appear in the holy place) and the daily sacrifice will be cut off (for a time, but that is another subject).

Now a sanctuary cannot be polluted if none exists, an abomination of desolation cannot appear in a holy place if there is no temple, and a daily sacrifice cannot be cut off if none is being offered. So these must all be established before the Lord returns. And if once we understand this, then, as we read our Bibles, we will find

allusions to a pre-advent temple in very many latter-day prophecies.

A number of Jewish movements, of which the Temple Mount Faithful are but one, have for several years been steadily working toward the establishment of a functioning temple. This is probably well known. None has so far been taken seriously because their dreams seem utterly impossible of fulfilment; the Muslims appear to be too deeply entrenched on the Temple Mount. We cannot say how, when, or by whom the temple will be set up—or even precisely where. But we know that the word of the Lord is immutable and His will cannot fail. The fracas of 29 July 2001, lost in the general confusion of the continuing problems in Israel, may not be more than just a tiny part of the developing picture. But, sooner or later, a way will be found and a temple will be established, preparing the way for the fulfilment of a great deal of as yet unfulfilled prophecy. "So . . . when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Mt. 24:33).

In "Will the Jews rebuild the temple?" (Mar. 1996, p. 100; April 1996, p. 130; May 1996, p. 168) I considered in some detail the question of Jews and the rebuilding of the temple, concluding that there is nothing in Scripture to support the idea that they will do so before the return of Christ—*T.B.*

8. The other three places are Daniel 8:13; 9:27; 12:11.

Daniel's time of trouble

Tony Benson

THE ARTICLE "Concerning a 'third' Jewish temple" (p. 90) argues from the similarity between Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21 that "The Olivet Prophecy is not about A.D. 70", and states that the reference in Matthew 24:15 to "the abomination of desolation" standing "in the holy place" means therefore that the Jews will build a temple in Jerusalem before Christ returns. It is not the purpose of this article to deal with the question of whether the Jews will do this or not, as I have considered this already (see note above), but to examine the question of whether the similarity between Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21 does indeed establish that the Mount Olivet Prophecy is

about the time of Christ's return rather than A.D. 70.

There are two reasons why we should be wary of accepting that the similarity between the two passages places the fulfilment of the Olivet Prophecy entirely in times yet future:

- 1 The verses preceding Matthew 24:21 are appropriate to the preaching of the gospel in the first century and Rome's war against the Jews in A.D. 66-73, particularly the siege and taking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
- 2 If this verse refers to a period of intense Jewish tribulation just before Christ's return then what is the point of the words, "no, nor ever shall be"?—for it is obvious that after Christ's